



Australian Bureau of Statistics

1104.0 - CURF Microdata News, Mar 2007

Previous ISSUE Released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 30/03/2007

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Microdata Access Strategies Section (MASS): New name, same great service

The CURF Management Unit (CMU) has changed its name. We are now the Microdata Access Strategies Section (MASS). We might have a new name, but you'll be dealing with the same people and getting the same great service.

So why have we changed our name?

It's to do with our forward work program. ABS intends to develop more tools to access microdata, release more microdata products, and provide client-targeted education programs in support of this growing business. And we are developing strategies to do so. Access strategies; that's us.

I'm new to CURF Microdata. What do MASS do?

MASS supports and encourages the increased use of data in the Australian community by developing the policy, administrative and technical infrastructure enabling easy access to ABS microdata.

We are responsible for:

- supporting and encouraging greater use of ABS microdata through improved systems and services;
- liaising with other ABS areas for the introduction of methods, processes and procedures for maintaining the confidentiality of microdata;
- developing and promoting ABS information service policies and procedures that are aligned with government objectives.

MASS manages access to Confidential Unit Record Files (CURFs) by external clients and supports CURF users, specifically, it provides a national centralised point for the development, management and support of all CURF related client access activities including:

- development and maintenance of clients' access to ABS microdata via CD-ROM, the Remote Access Data Laboratory (RADL) and on-site ABS Data Laboratory (ABSDL).
- being the national centralised contact for external CURF microdata clients; these include Commonwealth, State and Local Government agencies, the university sector and many other organisations -
- being the national centralised contact for internal clients; this includes advice to other ABS areas regarding activities and policies for producing and delivering CURFs and coordination of legal and administrative requirements for CURF access.

Where does MASS fit into the ABS ?

The Information Management and Census Division (IMCD) aims to ensure that the ABS continues to develop, adapt and adopt the world's best practice in the efficient and effective collection, processing, management and dissemination of statistical information.

IMCD consists of three branches, one of which is Information Services Branch (ISB). ISB supports the ABS Mission by communicating official statistics through a wide range of high quality information products and services that are closely aligned to identified client needs. MASS is part of ISB.

How do you contact MASS?

All CURF Applications and Undertakings should be sent to the postal address in the 'Contact Us' section at

the end of this Newsletter. CURF related enquiries can be emailed to microdata.access@abs.gov.au and RADL related enquiries can be emailed to radl@abs.gov.au MASS will be updating the website and CURF Applications and Undertakings with new contact information shortly.

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The March RADL upgrade

An upgrade to RADL was implemented on 26 March 2007. The upgrade primarily improves the stability of RADL. However, user functionality is enhanced with the release of Stata user-written modules *hnblogit* and *ivreg2*.

The Stata module *hnblogit* allows the user to fit negative binomial-logit hurdle regression models to their data. Module *ivreg2* implements a range of single-equation estimation methods for the linear regression model. It provides extensions to Stata's official *ivreg* and *newey* commands, and has the same command syntax as *ivreg*. Main extensions provided by the module include additional estimation methods and test statistics not present in *ivreg*.

MASS hope users find the implementation of these modules useful. We welcome feedback from users on these modules.

Among other RADL developments, RADL users may be pleased to learn that MASS are working toward implementing current versions of SPSS and Stata on RADL during 2007. We'll let you know when implementation dates are known.

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The 2007 ABS/AVCC CURF Agreement

The ABS has an Agreement with the Australian Vice Chancellors Committee (AVCC) to make available Confidentialised Unit Record Files (CURFs) to support teaching and research in Australian universities.

The Agreement began in January 1999. In December 2006, ABS and AVCC signed an Amendment to the Agreement for the 2007 calendar year. The amended Agreement provides approved researchers in AVCC member universities with access to both ABS CURFs and confidentialised household survey microdata via the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS).

Individuals within universities who wish to undertake academic research or require CURFs for the purposes of teaching, have the opportunity to access CURFs at no additional cost, so long as their university is party to the Agreement.

There are currently 33 universities participating in the Agreement. A list of participating universities can be found on the ABS web site through [CURF Access Contacts](#).

For more information about the ABS/AVCC CURF Agreement and use of CURFs in Australian universities, please see [ABS/AVCC CURF Agreement](#) on the ABS web site.

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Recent and upcoming CURF releases

MASS is preparing for the expected release of several CURFs in April and May. A summary of each of these CURFs is below for your information.

Expected April releases

Innovation in Australian Business (IABS), 2003, Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File, Cat.No. 8158.0.55.01

This is an expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF) from the Innovation Survey 2003. The Innovation survey provides statistics on business innovation in Australia and key characteristics of innovating businesses. The CURF will contain unidentified individual statistical records with information about Australian businesses that innovated during the three years ended December 2003. The 2003 Innovation in Australian Business CURF will be available via the Remote Access Data Laboratory (RADL) as an Expanded File only. Detailed information about the contents of the IABS 2003 CURF will be available on the ABS website in the IABS 2003 Technical Paper (cat. no. 8158.0.55.002).

General Social Survey, 2006, Basic and Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File, Cat.No. 4159.0.30.001 (Basic), Cat.No. 4159.0.30.002 (Expanded)

A Basic and Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File from the 2006 General Social Survey, this CURF draws together information from areas of social concern. The focus is on the relationships between characteristics from different areas, rather than in depth information about a particular field. Topics include health, housing, residential mobility, education, work, income, financial stress, broad assets and liabilities, information technology, transport, social capital, voluntary work, family and community, crime, attendance at selected sport, culture and leisure venues and participation in sport and recreational activities. Some information is also included on visa status.

Labour Mobility Survey, February 2006, Basic Confidentialised Unit Record File, Cat.No. 6202.0.30.004

The Labour Mobility Survey was conducted in Australia in February 2006. This CURF presents information about people aged 15 years and over who worked at some time during the year ending February 2006.

The February 2006 survey was redesigned and data items and populations that referred to locality, are no longer available, as the information was not collected in the February 2006 survey.

New data items were introduced to provide information on people who had worked with their current employer/business for one year or more, and had changes in the work undertaken with their current employer/business in the last 12 months. These data items include whether promoted or transferred, whether changed usual hours worked and whether changed occupation.

A number of socio-demographic data items were also collected and are included on the CURF, including capital city/balance of state; State/Territory of usual residence; age; sex; family status; marital status; birthplace and year of arrival in Australia. Also included are details on labour force status; occupation; industry; educational qualifications; employment type; status in employment; full-time/part-time status;

duration with employer/business; reason for ceasing last job; paid sick/holiday leave entitlements and number of employers or businesses in the last 12 months.

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Household Expenditure Survey and Survey of Income and Housing, 2003-04, 2nd Edition, Basic and Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File, Cat No. 6540.0

The Second Edition of the Household Expenditure Survey and Survey of Income and Housing, 2003-04 CURFs include additional data on the HES files only. The new items relate to the effects of selected government benefits and taxes on household income. and are derived from the survey data in conjunction with other data. The items include household taxes on production (previously referred to as indirect taxes), social transfers in kind (STIK) (previously referred to as indirect benefits) and final household income (disposable income plus STIK minus taxes on production).

Expected May releases

Household Expenditure Survey, 1998-99, 3rd Edition, Basic Confidentialised Unit Record File, Cat. No. 6544.0.30.001

This The third edition of this CURF contains additional information on taxes on production (previously referred to as indirect taxes) based on the revised methodology which was developed for the 2003-04 study of the effects of government benefits and taxes on household income. This will facilitate comparison of the taxes on production information between the 1998-99 and 2003-04 CURFs.

Recently Released

Multi Purpose Household Survey, 2005-06, Expanded Confidentialised Unit Record File, Cat. No. 4100.0

The Multi Purpose Household Survey (MPHS) was conducted in Australia from July 2005 to June 2006. With the exception of the Work related injuries topic, data for each topic were obtained from one randomly selected person aged 15 years or over in 14,219 private dwelling households across Australia (excluding very remote areas). For the Work related injuries topic, data were obtained from an additional 15,016 private dwelling households (giving a total of 29,235 private dwelling households) to improve the reliability of the estimates.

The 2005-06 MPHS collected data on five topics: Household use of information technology; Participation in sport and physical activity; Attendance at selected culture and leisure venues and events; Sports attendance; Work-related injuries.

For more information, please refer to the [Multi Purpose Household Survey \(2005-06\) CURF Information Paper](#) (Cat.No. 4100.0).

Please be aware that MASS regularly updates the [List of CURFs Expected to be Released](#) on the ABS website as new information about future CURF releases come to hand.

For detailed information about all new and existing CURFs available refer to [List of Available CURFs](#).

If you have any questions or would like more information about the items listed please contact us.

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Annual Renewals are about to commence

Annual Renewals for universities will commence in April with CURF Contact Officers receiving an email detailing the requirements and completion date.

Organisations can expect an email from the Microdata Access Strategies Section confirming their current list of CURFs and Individual Users to date in the coming months.

Annual CURF Renewals have a number of benefits for you, our users, and for the ABS. For the ABS, they provide feedback on client use of microdata in ways that guide the ongoing improvement of our services. They also help our subject matter areas to plan for future CURF releases.

For you, they allow the ABS to list your published output on its web site, potentially increasing your readership in the process. And, of course, you are the final beneficiaries of our improved services.

As well, for both you and the ABS, Renewals give us confidence that your CURF related activities continue to comply with the conditions placed on CURF access.

So that we might add your output to our website, Renewals ask individual users to report the outcomes of their CURF use, including ongoing work and published journal articles, papers, conference submissions, etc.

When details of final outputs are available, the ABS compiles a list of Published Research using CURF Microdata. This information also assists ABS subject-matter areas in planning future CURFs. Please refer to the following section for more information.

Annual CURF Renewals are a mandatory requirement for access to CURFs. If you require any assistance with the Annual Renewal process please contact [<microdata.access@abs.gov.au>](mailto:microdata.access@abs.gov.au)

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MASS Media

Welcome to MASS Media. This is a regular section in the CURF Microdata Newsletter that seeks to inform users about new CURF self-help products and changes to our self-help information.

Release of the Step By Step Guide on Applying for and managing ABS Confidential Unit Record Files (CURFs)

MASS will be releasing a new user guide which summarises the key things users need to know about CURF access. Called

Applying for and managing ABS Confidential Unit Record Files (CURFs) - A Step by Step Guide, it provides clients with:

- i. procedural information about applying for CURFs, and
- ii. clear summary information about what ABS expects of its users in the management of CURF data and access.

The Step By Step Guide includes a number of best practice tips about accessing CURFs. For example:

Leaving your organisation?

If so, you must return all copies of CURF microdata to your organisation's Contact Officer or the ABS, and must surrender your access to RADL.

Please contact your organisation's CURF Contact Officer at least ten working days before leaving the organisation and return any copies of CURFs on CD-ROM and accesses.

Importantly, the Step By Step Guide provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities for CURF Individual Users, CURF Contact Officers, CURF Responsible Officers, CURF Consultants and their Sponsoring Organisations.

The guide will be available to download shortly from the CURF web pages via [www.abs.gov.au/Services we provide/Accessing CURF Microdata](http://www.abs.gov.au/Services/we provide/Accessing CURF Microdata). We welcome feedback on the Guide to our address microdata.access@abs.gov.au.

New and changed CURF Microdata pages on the ABS website

MASS is committed to continually improving its web presence for the benefit of its growing and diverse client base. This month, new information on CURF Security and Confidentiality was released on the website. Information about CURF Security and Confidentiality is available through the [Frequently Asked Questions](#), on the [CURF Microdata Entry Page](#).

Information on the [Frequently Asked Questions/ Applying for CURF Microdata](#) page has been restructured and now contains Frequently Asked Questions related directly to applying for CURFs. When published, the Step by Step Guide (link)? will also provide useful information on this topic.

Additionally, the [CURF Research Activities](#) have been restructured to enable easier navigation through published research. The Research Activities are now listed by CURF, rather than by year, making it easier to navigate through references to publications and other CURF research outputs. This information on research outputs was submitted by clients in the Annual Renewal process.

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MASS Culture

MASS Culture is a regular supplement to the CURF Microdata Newsletter that seeks to assist clients with building a culture of efficient and responsible use of CURF microdata, and inform users about ways that ABS are helping to create this culture.

Auditing RADL usage

Audits of jobs submitted to RADL are conducted throughout the year by the ABS. The purpose of these audits is to identify confidentiality issues within users' code, log or output files. These issues may arise through users failing to follow, accidentally or otherwise, restrictions or rules for using RADL.

For each job that is audited, the code, log and output files are manually inspected by ABS staff. If a confidentiality issue is identified, the user in question will be notified by email. Users are required to cooperate with any ABS audit directions in respect to their code and output.

Further information on Restrictions and Rules for RADL use can be found in the [Remote Access Data Laboratory \(RADL\) User Guide](#) (Cat no. 1406.0.55.002).

RADL users should be aware that their organisations Responsible Office has signed an undertaking specifying that ABS officers or their nominated representatives are allowed access to all necessary documents and information for the purposes of conducting a compliance audit concerning the observance of the terms and conditions under which information is disclosed by ABS.

It is also a requirement of the Individual User Undertaking (IUU1) that individual users comply with the directions or requirements specified in the [ABS Responsible Access to ABS Confidentialised Unit Record Files \(CURFs\) Training Manual](#).

Auditing programs and outputs

- Users are required to cooperate with any ABS audit directions in respect to their code and output.
 - The ABS maintains a log of code and outputs run in the RADL securely stored within the ABS computing environment to be used for administrative and auditing purposes only.

Source: [\(ABS Responsible Access to ABS Confidentialised Unit Record Files \(CURFs\) Training Manual, page 9\)](#)

What does ABS mean when it releases output as 'Keep Secure'

ABS sometimes release output to RADL users that needs to be kept secure. Output released as 'Keep Secure' must be very carefully managed by clients.

All RADL output that ABS releases with a 'Keep Secure' caveat can be used in further analysis. However, it cannot be published. 'Keep Secure' output includes all printouts of unit record information, as well as the results of analysis with any likelihood of breaching confidentiality.

How do clients ensure they are taking the appropriate steps to carefully manage their 'Keep Secure' output?

'Keep Secure' means that analytical results, whether they include unit information or not, must be retained in a secure environment. Printouts of this nature should be kept under lock and key, and electronic output must be stored in strongly protected systems.

RADL 'Keep Secure' printouts must be securely destroyed (ie shredded) when no longer needed, and analytical output (whether or not it includes unit record information) held in an intranet must be deleted. Deletion must happen in such a way that recovery is not possible by unauthorised people.

RADL 'Keep Secure' output cannot be shared between users who do not have access to the source CURF, nor with users in other organisations whether or not they do have access to the CURF.

If you require more information about **Keeping Unit Information Secure**, please refer to the CURF Responsible Access to CURFs Training Manual or email [<microdata.access@abs.gov.au>](mailto:microdata.access@abs.gov.au)

Test whether your RADL code works with our test files

Sometimes the way RADL works can surprise users. Code that they might normally expect to run against an ABS CURF in their own environment doesn't fully work in RADL.

So how can users go about checking whether their code will run in RADL?

There's two ways: firstly, check out the restrictions on program statements in Chapter 2.3 of the *Remote Access Data Laboratory (RADL) User Guide* (Cat no. 1406.0.55.002).

Secondly, download a CURF test file and run your code against it.

MASS provides authorised RADL users with test files for each new CURF to which they have access. Test files are downloadable files with exactly the same structure as the CURF. The data in each test file however is synthetic and has been randomly generated.

Downloaded test files can be used to develop code to run against the actual CURF on RADL. RADL programs can be run locally against downloaded test files to check for coding errors prior to submitting the job through the RADL.

Test files are available for all CURFs released since 2005, and are being developed for all CURFs hosted on RADL. RADL users can locate test files for the CURFs to which they have authorised access in the 'CURF Documentation' pages accessed via the Help link in the RADL.

Contact Us

MASS continues to be available to help you with any queries that cannot be answered by your organisation's CURF Contact Officer, or from ABS CURF web pages. Our staff include Kim Farley-Lamour (Director), Grant Mitchell (Assistant Director), Simone Maconachie, Bob Osten, Damien Kennedy, Carolyne Henderson, Rachel Price and Liliana Rojas.

If you have a query for ABS about accessing CURFs, would like to request more microdata training for your organisation, or if you require more information about the *ABS/AVCC CURF Agreement*, please contact the Microdata Access and Strategies Section at:

Email: microdata.access@abs.gov.au
Phone: 02 6252 7714
Address: Assistant Director
Microdata Access Strategies Section
ABS House

45 Benjamin Way
Belconnen ACT 2617
02 6252 8132

Fax:

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CURF Microdata News is a quarterly newsletter created by the CURF Management Unit (CMU) at the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

CURF Microdata News is aimed at informing new and current Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF) Microdata users about issues and developments in the access to, and use of, CURF Microdata. The newsletter periodically covers topics such as available and forthcoming microdata releases, terms and conditions of access, responsible access to microdata and best practice tips, pricing, microdata research outputs, frequently asked questions, and information about applying for ABS CURF microdata.

Interested readers are also invited to visit the CURF Microdata pages on the ABS web site for relevant up-to-date information about each of these matters, as well as all application forms.

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